

Unidentified Brick Building (B. F. Dowell's Law Office)
125 South Third Street
Jacksonville
Jackson County
Oregon

HABS No. ORE-73

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PHOTOGRAPH

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. ORE-73

UNIDENTIFIED BRICK BUILDING
(KNOWN LOCALLY AS B.F. DOWELL'S LAW OFFICE)

Location: 125 South Third Street, Jacksonville, Jackson County,
Oregon.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The brick building on the east side of South Third Street between California and Main Streets is known locally as "Benjamin F. Dowell's Law Office." This attribution is uncertain, however. It has been definitely established that at one time there were several buildings in that block of Third Street: one was Dowell's office; another was a structure which saw a number of uses, including that of hotel, restaurant, office, and residence.

B.F. Dowell first acquired an interest in a Third Street lot in 1861, when he purchased a thirty by one hundred foot parcel near the middle of the block.¹ At that time, the lot included his law office. In 1865, when James Cluggage delivered a deed to Dowell, the lot was described as approximately twenty-one feet by one hundred feet in size, "including B.F. Dowell's Law Office."² Dowell had an office on Third Street for many years. In 1884, an article in the Democratic Times reported that "B.F. Dowell's law office and the adjacent buildings had a narrow escape from destruction a few evenings since." A fire had been discovered by Mrs. John Miller, whose house was next door to the office. Only the fence was damaged, however.³

At the time that Cluggage delivered the deed to B.F. Dowell for his office on Third Street, he also delivered a deed to P.J. Ryan for an adjacent lot thirty-seven by one hundred feet, lying north of Dowell's lot and south of the Express Saloon.⁴ On the 1868 plat of the town, a building approximately the size of the present structure is shown as a hotel, with a law office standing to the south of it.⁵ While the existing references to Dowell's office do not describe the structure itself, advertisements of the 1870s do refer to P.J. Ryan's brick building on Third Street.⁶ Since the present so-called law office is the only brick building on the block and since there is no evidence of there having been a second brick building, it seems probable that the existing structure is Ryan's and that Dowell's office was the smaller structure which stood to the south of it.

While no date can be ascribed to any structure built by Ryan on Third Street, the 1868 map suggests that this brick building was erected before

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that year, but after 1864--since it does not appear on the 1864 plat of the town.⁷ Over the years the building had a number of different occupants and a variety of uses. In 1871, Dr. S.F. Chapin had his office and residence there.⁸ In 1879, Mrs. Haskins opened a boarding house in Ryan's brick building.⁹ George M. Coburn took it over later that year and renamed it the Jacksonville Hotel;¹⁰ according to a contemporary advertisement, meals at the hotel were twenty-five cents.¹¹ In 1880, Coburn sold the hotel to Madame Holt, the owner of the United States Hotel.¹² In 1883, the building was rented to the Hanley brothers for a butcher shop;¹³ the following year, the Democratic Times noted that "the Room in Ryan's brick building on Third Street next door to the City market is being fitted up by William Linn and W.T. Moore for an ice-cream saloon."¹⁴ The double doorway on the facade of the present building suggests that it was intended for double occupancy. The structure is at present owned and occupied by Mr. Robbie Collins as his residence.

B.F. Dowell--whose law offices occupied either this structure or its near neighbor--was one of the leading lawyers in Southern Oregon. Born in Albermarle, Virginia, and an alumnus of the University of Virginia Law School, he was probably the best-educated lawyer in Southern Oregon--and perhaps in the entire territory--when he arrived in 1852.¹⁵ In 1864, he purchased the Republican newspaper, the Oregon Sentinel, which he owned for fourteen years.¹⁶ One of Dowell's principal concerns was the treatment of both whites and Indians during the early years of conflict in the area. In his opinion the Rogue River War of 1853 had been "caused by bad whites and vindictive Indians."¹⁷ As he explained it, a white man named Edwards had stolen an Indian slave and had refused to pay the owner; the Indians then attacked the whites and murdered Edwards, thus precipitating the war. After the wars, however, Dowell spent considerable time in Washington representing settlers who had claims against the government for losses suffered during the conflicts.¹⁸ His business and personal affairs suffered as a consequence, and his property in Jacksonville was frequently mortgaged to raise cash.¹⁹ Among the properties mortgaged was an Italianate-style brick house on north Fifth Street probably built by Dowell around 1861.²⁰

FOOTNOTES

1
Jackson County Deeds, January 30, 1861.

2
Ibid., November 30, 1865.

3
The Democratic Times, February 15, 1884.

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4

Jackson County Deeds, November 13, 1865.

5

"Map of Jacksonville," 1868.

6

The Democratic Times, January 28, 1871, for example.

7

C.E. Curley [and J.S. Howard], "Map of Jacksonville," 1864 and "Map of Jacksonville," 1868.

8

The Democratic Times, September 30, 1871.

9

Ibid., October 17, 1879.

10

Ibid., December 12, 1879.

11

Ibid., December 26, 1879.

12

Ibid., March 26, 1880.

13

Ibid., November 23, 1883.

14

Ibid., April 13, 1884.

15

Hubert Howe Bancroft, History of Oregon, 1848-1888 (San Francisco: The History Company, 1888), p. 370, n.1 and A.G. Walling, History of Southern Oregon, Comprising Jackson, Josephine, Douglas, Curry, and Coos Counties (Portland, Oregon: The Publishing House of A.G. Walling, 1884), biographical appendix.

16

Walling, p. 369.

17

Stephen Dow Beckham, Requiem for a People: The Rogue Indians and the Frontiersmen (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971, p. 125.

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18

B.F. Dowell Papers, University of Oregon MSS.

19

Jackson County Deeds, May 25, 1876; February 6, 1878; and December 27, 1879.

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Jackson County Deeds, May 20, 1861 (see HABS No. ORE-72).

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. Description of Exterior:

1. Number of stories: The building is a story and a half.
2. Number of bays: The west facade is four bays.
3. Layout, shape: The building is rectangular. A shed-roofed addition across the east end adds greater depth.
4. Wall construction, finish, color: The walls are brick with a natural finish.
5. Chimneys: There is a chimney on the north wall near the facade. A second chimney sits on the ridge near the east end of the building.
6. Openings: All of the openings are spanned by brick relieving arches two headers tall and of segmental profile. The two bays in the center of the facade are doorways, with three-light transoms above square-headed doors. The doors are four panel, with the tall panels above and short panels below. The window openings in the outside bays and on the center line in the gable contain six-over-six double-hung sash with square heads. Projecting brick window sills provide the only relief from the surface of the wall. The relieving arches are set flush with the wall plane and the tympanums are in-filled with brick.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape: The roof is gabled, with the ridge running perpendicular to the street.

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- b. Cornice: The eaves project, with simple moldings at the edge and wall. A simple wooden frieze runs along the sides under the eaves and is returned around the corner on each side of the front. The frieze also rakes along the sides of the gable.

B. Description of Interior:

The interior has been extensively remodelled. The present partition wall running along the center line of the building replaces an earlier wall in the same location. The staircase rises from a vestibule entered from a doorway on the north side wall of the building; it rises in a straight run to a landing that divides the second floor into a front and a back room. On the first floor, the south half of the building is a single room running from front to back; the north half is two rooms, divided by the staircase to the second floor. The northwest room has a mantelpiece that is early, if not original. A lean-to addition on the rear (east) end contains a kitchen.

C. Site and Surroundings:

The building is a detached structure built along the west lot line. On the south there is another detached structure; on the north, a vacant lot--once the location of a large, frame commercial structure. On the east there is a fenced garden with large trees. The sidewalk in front of the building is brick.

D. Original Appearance:

Originally, there was a canopy across the facade; it was supported by posts set along the street. The division of the facade and the interior axial partition wall suggest that the building was designed for use as two offices of commercial structures or perhaps a combined commercial and residential use.

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